



# PARADE GROUND



## *Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry*



The Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry is North Carolina's oldest military unit and the second-oldest militia organization in the U.S.



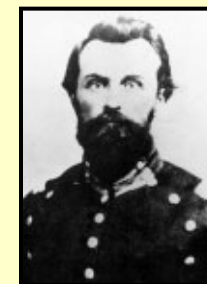
**Lt. Charles B. Cook, Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry, wearing a plumed hat.**  
*Courtesy Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry*

At the start of the Civil War, after North Carolina seceded, the company enrolled in active service for six months on April 17, 1861, as Company H, 1st North Carolina Infantry. It seized the U.S. arsenal here and occupied it until the Confederate government took control. In May, the company departed for the camp of instruction in Raleigh. The ladies of Fayetteville untrimmed their hats to trim those of the soldiers with black plumes, so the "officers and men of the Independents strutted like gamecocks, with elaborate plumes on their broad brimmed hats." The company took part in the first major land engagement of the war at Big Bethel, Virginia, on June 10. When the six-month enlistment ended, the group returned to Fayetteville.

On February 22, 1862, the Independents were reorganized, and many members received commissions or appointments in other units. Others joined the Clarendon Guards for duty at Fort Fisher, leaving a home guard here of men too young or too old to fight. Today the Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry, which remained in active service through World War I, is North Carolina's official historic military command and still musters on the parade ground.

On August 23, 1793, the Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry Company was organized here as the local militia. Members mustered and drilled on this parade ground, where company fifer Isaac Hammond, an African American who had served in the American Revolution, is also buried. When the Marquis de Lafayette visited Fayetteville in 1825, the Independents escorted him.

**Lt. Benjamin R. Huske took part in the Battle of Big Bethel. Two days later, he wrote his wife that he was "at the main [artillery] battery and had a**



**Lt. Benjamin R. Huske**  
*Courtesy Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry*

***fine view of the entire fight. ... Gracious how the balls did shower around us and 3 struck the piece we were next to. You can't form any idea of***

***how they hissed and struck, just like a shower of hot stones falling into the water. ... Well you will ask how did you feel just as cool as could be – by no means comfortable but with a determination to do my whole duty whatever the consequence."***